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PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: LEADER'S BUSINESS

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL KEVIN P. BYRNES

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PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: LEADER'S BUSINESS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: LEADER'S BUSINESS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

FM 100-5 states "The most essential element of combat power is competent and confident leadership."¹ General Vuono translates this into a training requirement in the preface to FM 25-100 "Leader training is an imperative for every echelon; it is an investment in the Army of today and tomorrow."² We've taken leader competencies to heart in recent years; but, it was only fifteen to twenty years ago that the leadership of the military services was ravaged by ethical crises. While the Vietnam and post-Vietnam era leadership and its philosophies and practices have been the subject of wide debate, the overwhelming issues involve ethical questions versus technical or tactical competencies.

A study conducted by the Army War College in 1970, at the direction of then Army Chief of Staff, General Westmoreland, "identified a serious gap between the ideal professional climate and the climate perceived by the Army officers....young committed captains were 'frustrated by the pressures of the system, disheartened by seniors who sacrificed integrity on the

altar of personal success, and impatient with what they perceived as preoccupation with insignificant statistics'."3

This was the era of the body count, battlefield atrocities, false reporting, zero defects, careerism, ticket-punching, club scandals, theft, management by statistics, and assorted other underhanded practices. I can clearly recall many of the challenges of the time, particularly a lesson I was given in AWOL reporting by an irate Corps Artillery Commander. This particular lesson was designed to teach me that AWOL's weren't really AWOL if they could be carried on leave, passed on in any other manner other than AWOL. Fortunately I was rescued by my Battalion Commander who allowed me to continue reporting accurately, although I'm sure he took a lot of pressure.

A follow-on study on professional military ethics, conducted in 1977 at the Army War College by MAJ Melville A. Drisko, determined that the ethical climate had not changed very much from that found during the 1970 study. There still existed a significant difference between stated and operating ethics. The recruiting scandals of the late 1970's, pressures to compromise in reporting statistics, limited resources, outdated equipment, and the mindless pursuit of zero defects programs are examples of the causes of moral problems that

existed in our leader ranks. Attached as Appendix 1 is a summary of the examples of unethical conduct noted during the 1970 and 1977 studies referred to above.⁴

However, recent studies (1987 and 1988) by students at the Army War College show that we've made significant progress.

"The good news is that our senior leaders are generally believed to be managerially and technically competent, loyal to subordinates, they insist on honest reporting of status and statistics, they do not condone or encourage the bending of ethical standards to accomplish demanding requirements, their personal behavior is a positive example of ethical conduct, they are not biased against blacks and they personally confront their subordinates when they are dissatisfied with their performance."

"The bad news is...they were seen as not being approachable and not facilitating the creation or maintenance of a positive communications climate (in 29% of the cases); they were seen as being intolerant of subordinates' honest mistakes and failures (in 24% of the cases); they were seen to be preoccupied with personal success and promotion (in 24% of the cases); and they were noted as being uninterested in taking the lead in the teaching of ethics and values (in 37% of the cases)."⁵

Based on these recent studies and personal observations and research, I'm convinced that the overall ethical climate existing in the Army today is very healthy. The officer and noncommissioned officer education systems have been revamped and now include ample instruction on the ethical demands of leadership. Command emphasis has made leader development

programs effective. Since the early 1980's resources have been plentiful, bringing to the Army soldiers of extremely high quality; accommodating a thorough equipment modernization program; and, permitting commanders to conduct meaningful, realistic training. Even as resources decrease in the 1990's, current forecasts predict leader training programs and the accession of quality soldiers are to remain well resourced. 1986 was declared "The Year of Values" in the Army and caused us to take an even deeper look at ourselves. A renewed spirit of patriotism and trust in the government and military has replaced the social turmoil experienced during the Vietnam years. We've taken a quantum leap forward, and while there remain many challenges, today's problems pale in comparison to the dilemmas of the 1970's. Current ethical demands and their causes will be addressed in chapter III.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role that senior leaders play in the ethical development of their subordinate leaders. In developing that discussion, the following related topics are addressed: ethical ideals, current guidance, training, challenges that exist, and commander imperatives.

ENDNOTES

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2. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 25-100, p. i.
3. Lewis H. Gray, Jr., MAJ, "Integrity: What Are The Data Telling Us?", in Air University Review, Sep-Oct 1985, p. 84.
4. Thomas E. Kelley III, "Ethics in the Military Profession: The Continuing Tension," in Military Ethics and Professionalism, ed. by James Brown and Michael J. Collins, p. 28.
5. William W. Braun, LTC, An Ethical Army Leadership - Real or Wanting, p. 21.

CHAPTER II

ETHICAL ATTRIBUTES AND EXPECTATIONS

Duty, Honor, Country has long been the central theme in the ethical development of our military profession. While no written code exists for ethical conduct in our officer ranks, there are many prescriptions for the ideal attributes in officers. This chapter examines: what experts suggest are appropriate ideals, existing guidance regarding ethical behavior, and whether or not a formal written code is necessary to guide our conduct.

ETHICAL BASE

Ethics is defined as "The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by the individual in his relationship with others; the philosophy of morals."¹ A more simple definition could be the study of how we should behave. These values are developed early and then refined throughout our lifetimes. Parents, schools, religion, close associates, and the society at large play major parts in the development of individual convictions and the reasoning process. Our system of values is reflective of our national

goals and objectives. "Without honesty, freedom is unsafe. Without freedom, it is unsafe to be honest....Without a strong foundation of ethics, laws cannot be effective....Ethics is the lifeblood of a free society, and it can tolerate only so much adulteration."² These thoughts sum up the relationship between ethical conduct and a free society. In a sense our ethical beliefs are the price we pay for a way of life in which human dignity, equality, and individual freedoms are cornerstones.

When a soldier, a future leader, enters the Army he swears to support and defend the Constitution and our way of life. As he does so he enters a profession where ethical failures can prove fatal. Given that the military is an extension of policy, the potential costs of a breakdown in the ethical fiber of our leadership could be catastrophic to our soldiers and ultimately our nation. Many professions are held to high ethical standards; however, it is only in the military profession where the risks are so high. It is therefore essential that appropriate values be developed and nurtured in military leaders and that they be held to a high standard of ethical conduct. As J.F.C. Fuller stated, "...until a man learns to command himself it is unlikely that his command over others will prove a profitable business."³

ATTRIBUTES

While there are many attributes that are essential in a leader, I've chosen to focus on three qualities that I believe are at the heart of the business of leadership. These are selflessness, competence, and integrity. It is this small group of traits that contribute most to the ethical fiber of a military leader. One could argue endlessly that other qualities are absolutely essential in a leader, and they would certainly be correct in their assessment. However, given the scope of this essay, I've limited the examination to the three traits I found most often addressed by leaders in the study of leadership and ethics.

Shortly after D-Day, while visiting Europe, General Marshall queried General Eisenhower regarding his selection of subordinate commanders, "'Eisenhower, you've chosen all these commanders or accepted the ones I suggested. What's the principal quality you look for?' Eisenhower (later related) 'Without thinking, I said Selflessness'."4 The subordination of personal interests to those of your soldiers, organization, and nation is indeed a critical trait in a leader. Sun Tzu wrote of selflessness "...the general who in advancing does not seek personal fame, and in withdrawing is not concerned with

avoiding punishment, but whose only purpose is to protect the people and promote the best interests of his sovereign, is the precious jewel of the state."⁵ Past ethical problems in the areas of false reporting, zero defects, and other such programs were born through the careerist instincts of the senior leader. Such programs by these ethical egoists resulted in chaos in the leadership ranks of the Army. The selfless leader, on the other hand, applies his skills for the greater good. This leader is easy to find. His unit is well disciplined because they train hard and remain mission oriented. The subordinate leaders take risks and learn from their honest mistakes. There is total candor in reporting, and there is nothing to hide because to do so would cause harm to the unit or its soldiers.

Many contend that competence is an essential quality in a military leader, given the nature of the military mission.

"...nations are critically dependent upon their armed forces for survival, and thus the competence of those forces is of graver concern and more general impact than that of any other profession."⁶

"...professional competence is legitimately viewed as a moral obligation, most especially in the military profession."⁷

"With respect to the development of tactics, weaponry, long range strategy, and the conditions for employing those weapons systems which pose serious threats to noncombatants, the military leader's competence is a crucial issue. Literally, he has a moral obligation to be competent in these areas."⁸

While tactical and technical competence have long been accepted as leader imperatives, a third dimension of competence, moral competence, deserves equal attention. Moral competence ties judgment and fairness to the harder skills associated with tactical and technical competencies. "...soldiers die, battles are lost, and nations fall just as surely from moral incompetence as from technical incompetence."⁹ Commanders are entrusted with high degrees of responsibility and authority. In the execution of these responsibilities they must ensure that they do so with all ethical implications in mind. Most important decisions have ethical considerations. The higher the level of command, the more complex and diverse the responsibilities become; therefore, the greater the need for a well developed ethical perspective.

Integrity is a third vital ethical attribute in leaders. Honesty, honor, and trust are closely related. Many consider integrity the cornerstone on which the reputation of the officer corps is built. "...integrity is the fundamental root trait of leadership."¹⁰ Most of the failures in the ethical make-up of our officer corps during the Vietnam and post-Vietnam years were integrity related. The problems crossed all service lines. Evidence of chronic false reporting drove then Air Force Chief of Staff, General John D. Ryan, to issue an Air

Force policy letter on integrity in November 1972. In this letter he stated "Integrity, which includes full and accurate disclosure, is the keystone of military service...False reporting is a clear example of a failure of integrity. Any order to compromise integrity is not a lawful order. Integrity is the most important responsibility of command."¹¹ Even today unless strong ethical climates exist in units, temptation exists to bend the truth, not tell the whole story, to exaggerate, or to tell the boss what he wants to hear. Challenges to leaders at all levels abound, particularly in our more bureaucratically led organizations in which management by statistics and a demand for perfection prevail.

The military profession is certainly not alone in its emphasis on integrity. Corporate America has paid an increasing amount of attention to ethics in the past ten years. Widely publicized accounts of defense industry fraud, major automobile industry resetting of odometers on alleged new cars, and the case of the sugar water apple juice are just a few of the tainted business practices that call for an ethically concerned business management. In a more dramatic case, there is hard evidence that the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986 was caused in large part by an ethically flawed decision making process in both NASA and Morton Thiokol (the

manufacturer of the solid rocket boosters). The day prior to the fatal launch, Morton Thiokol recommended against the launch because its engineers had discovered critical design faults in a large "O" ring seal on the booster. NASA management became irate and demanded that they reconsider their recommendation. Morton Thiokol leadership (despite arguments by their engineering experts) did reconsider and, for a variety of reasons, reversed their initial recommendation. Seems they told the boss what he wanted to hear rather than remain on the ethical high ground and alienate their most valued customer. The seal failed as foreseen by the engineers.¹²

EXISTING GUIDANCE

A wide variety of guidance has been published to cover many areas of ethical conduct. While this is not meant to be an all inclusive review, it is important to be aware of what guidance is available.

The basic ethical obligation of an officer is imbedded in the oath of office that he swears when accepting his commission. In taking this oath the officer swears, without any mental reservation, to support, defend, and bear true faith and allegiance to the constitution, and to faithfully discharge his duties.¹³ The enlisted oath similarly pledges to support

and defend the constitution; but, rather than swearing faithful execution of duties, the enlistee swears to obey the orders of his superiors. The key to this difference is in the ethical obligation the officer takes to execute duties in a faithful, or moral, manner.

The Code of Conduct establishes standards for soldierly conduct during combat, with emphasis on obligations should one become a prisoner-of-war. This code, published under Executive Order in August 1955, was developed based on the U.S. prisoner-of-war experiences during World War II and the Korean War. These individual standards, when taken with the laws of land warfare as codified in the Geneva and Hague Conventions, provide sufficient moral guidance to leaders on the conduct of war.

"The Uniform Code of Military Justice imposes many restrictions upon members of the armed forces, far beyond those which pertain to the ordinary citizen."¹⁴ The restrictions in this code have the impact of law. While ethical behavior is considered a higher standard than is lawful behavior, the code does mandate a baseline for behavior.

FM 100-1, "The Army", outlines the professional Army ethic. This ethic "espouses resolutely those essential values that guide the way we live our lives and perform our duties.

LOYALTY to the nation, to the Army, and to the unit...DUTY is obedience and disciplined performance, despite difficulty or danger...SELFLESS SERVICE puts the welfare of the nation and the accomplishment of the mission ahead of individual desires."¹⁵ This manual also prescribes the four individual values of COMMITMENT, CANDOR, COMPETENCE, and COURAGE as vital ingredients in support of the overall Army ethic.

FM 22-100 describes basic ethical traits and offers a sound explanation of each as well as thought provoking case studies. FM 22-103 however takes a similar theme but directs its attention to leadership at the senior levels. Its scope is necessarily very broad; but, it contains a superb chapter on the ethical responsibilities of senior leaders. It tells senior leaders that they have an obligation to "(be) worthy role models...promote the ethical development of their subordinates by teaching them how to reason clearly about ethical matters...(and) sustain an ethical climate that promotes trust and professional commitment."¹⁶ It goes on to caution senior leaders that perceptions, reaction to information, policies, and a myriad of other leader actions have a very significant impact on the health of the ethical climate in their units. Its basic message is that the morals of the commander become the morals of the organization.

FM 22-103 provides excellent ethical guidance for those who shape the moral fiber of our future senior leaders.

The Officer Efficiency Report (OER) (DA form 67-8) contains eight ethical values (DEDICATION, RESPONSIBILITY, LOYALTY, DISCIPLINE, INTEGRITY, MORAL COURAGE, SELFLESSNESS, and MORAL STANDARDS). The mere fact that these values are reflected on the OER sends a signal to the officer that these specific ethical responsibilities are viewed as key (hopefully not at the exclusion of other equally critical values). Nonetheless, it is a powerful reminder to the officer that ethics are highly valued in the officer corps.

DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY is the unwritten code of ideals for officers, derived from the United States Military Academy motto. Duty suggests high standards of performance, discipline, and selfless service. Honor clearly encompasses integrity - the bedrock of the profession. It also implies high moral standards of conduct. Country addresses patriotism and loyalty - the very essence of the officers' oath of office. The applicability of these ideals to the officer corps is best summed up by Lewis Sorley "the precepts of duty, honor, country are strong and meaningful influences on the ethical behavior of large numbers of professional officers, and thus are important and continuing factors in assuring the responsible, honest, and disciplined leadership of our army."¹⁷

IS A WRITTEN CODE NEEDED?

There is wide variety of guidance addressing ethical conduct; however, there exists no specific "Code of Ethics" for officers. Several ethicists and military leaders have argued that a formal code is necessary in order to clearly outline ethical expectations. Many hold that established guidance is too vague and cannot be universally applied. Others hold that a formal code would necessitate strict adherence, therefore giving more assurance that the conduct of officers would truly be above reproach. One argument articulates the following advantages of a written code:

"First, the very exercise of developing one is in itself worthwhile; it forces a large number of people within the military to think through...their mission and the important obligations they have...to society. Secondly, once adopted, such a code could generate continuing discussion...by officers throughout the armed services. Third, it could be used to help inculcate into new officers the perspective of responsibility, the need to think about their actions morally... Fourth, a code could be used as a document to which members of the military and the military as a whole could point when asked to do something contrary to it. Fifth, a code could be used to provide guidelines for reevaluating the UCMJ and other codes or statements. Sixth, it might be used to reassure citizens of the country that the military appreciates the trust placed in

it...Finally, a code could be used by citizens...to judge whether the military was living up to its obligations."¹⁸

Common objections to a formal code include: "A written code would have too broad an application and, therefore, would be subject to a multitude of varying interpretations. A written code could not efficiently be used to 'punish' unethical behavior. The last objection - ethics are situational and, therefore, preclude the establishment of a code of ethics."¹⁹ The first argument, concerning interpretation, represents the strongest reason why a written code may not be effective. It would tend to tell an officer, particularly any that may be prone to unethical behavior, that if the code doesn't prohibit a specific behavior, it must be permissible. Should the code espouse ideals or restrictions? I favor not publishing a formal code. There is ample guidance available on the subject. The guidance contained in FM 100-1 already articulates the professional army ethic to a satisfactory degree. That ethic has become a common thread in other recent publications, and there is every reason to believe that our senior leaders will ensure this continues. Finally, having reviewed several proposed formal codes, I find even the best efforts fall short of that guidance which is already available in the sources noted above (Existing Guidance).

ENDNOTES

1. The American Heritage Dictionary, 1973, p. 450.
2. Ivan Hill, Common Sense & Everyday Ethics, pp. 2-3.
3. J.F.C. Fuller, MG, Generalship Its Diseases and Their Cures, p. 23.
4. Don T. Riley, MAJ, "Serve Your Soldiers to Win," in Military Review, Nov 86, p. 11.
5. Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 128.
6. Lewis S. Sorley, "Competence as an Ethical Imperative: Issues of Professionalism," in Military Ethics and Professionalism, ed. by James Brown and Michael J. Collins, p. 41.
7. Malham M. Wakin, COL, "The Ethics of Leadership II," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p. 200.
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9. Charles W. Hudlin, "Morality and the Military Profession: Problems and Solutions," in Military Ethics, p. 82.
10. Malham M. Wakin, COL, "The Ethics of Leadership I," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p. 181.
11. John D. Ryan, GEN, "Integrity," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, ed. by Malham M. Wakin, p. 180.
12. Russell P. Boisjoly, Ellen Foster Curtis, and Eugene Mellican, "Roger Boisjoly and the Challenger Disaster: The Ethical Dimensions," in Journal of Business Ethics, 1989, pp. 218-223.
13. The Officers Guide, p. 4.
14. Ibid.

15. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-1, p. 22.

16. U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-103, p. 18.

17. Lewis S. Sorley, "Duty, Honor Country: Practice and Precept," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, ed. by Malham M. Wakin, p. 154.

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19. William F. Diehl, MAJ, "Ethics and Leadership: The Pursuit Continues," in Military Review, Apr 1985, p. 39.

CHAPTER III

ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND CAUSES

What ethical problems exist in the Army and what causes them? Why is it that the stated values of a commander or his organization are not always the values that subordinates abide by? This chapter examines the ethical faults and challenges that our leaders face in today's Army. The failings noted certainly do not represent an all inclusive listing of current ethical problems. Ethical failures which violate established laws (falsified travel records, misappropriation of government property, etc.) will not be addressed.

One author sees four current ethical pressures: "First, blatant or subtle forms of ethical relativism which blur the issue of what is right or wrong, or which bury it as a subject of little or no importance. Second, the exaggerated loyalty syndrome, where people are afraid to tell the truth and are discouraged from it. Third, the obsession with image, where people are not even interested in the truth. And last, the drive for success, in which ethical sensitivity is bought off or sold because of the personal need to achieve."¹ I view the image and drive issues to be part of the greater deficiency of

"careerism". Another author notes that current tensions include: "ethical use of authority...loyalty to the organizational position or policy versus adherence to personal conviction when the two are in conflict...the conflict between ambition and selflessness...(and) the difference between honesty and deception."² Both authors address two common issues, careerism and misplaced loyalty which I will examine, and add to the list: integrity failures, selective disobedience, and lack of ethical reflection.

While it is normal human behavior to be ambitious, it is an unhealthy or blind ambition that is characterized as careerism. Careerism as a trait is the opposite of selflessness. The ethical dilemma posed here is in how the individual rationalizes right from wrong using opposing motivational factors, the organization and himself. The orientation to "self" is morally wrong for a military leader given our mission and basic obligations to society.

There are many causes for this failing, some self-generated, others institutionalized. Existing personnel management systems which espouse that "you are your best career manager" and ticket punching are often the culprit. Selection for promotion, command, and schools is based on performance. This performance is measured and recorded on the Officer

Efficiency Report (OER). This mechanism alone often develops careerist instincts in leaders. Self-imposed pressure to compete with your peers can also plant the seeds of unhealthy ambition. Is careerism prevalent in our Army? "In a 1985 Army War College study on military professionalism, it was learned that of the 14,500 Army officers surveyed, 68 percent agreed the officer corps was preoccupied with personal gain rather than selflessness."³

The second common failing is misguided loyalty. Loyalty becomes a fault when the importance of the ethical aspects of a situation becomes secondary to loyalty to a superior, organization, or policy. Blind and unquestioning obedience can never be the standard. "...professional stress on integrity, obedience, and loyalty builds antagonism into the individual/professional relationship...professional demands often require subordination of individual values to maintain the honor and integrity of the profession. This problem has been a continuing source of tension..."⁴ Often, however, a deep sense of loyalty is developed for all the right reasons. Perhaps the leader is a member of a superior organization or works for a boss of proven ethical strengths, his loyalty is then based on a foundation of trust. "...the soldier of a democracy can remain a moral agent, ultimately responsible for

his actions, and can at the same time obey the orders of a person he trusts, on the presumption that the orders are legally and morally correct. This is a presumption that all Americans would like to make about the military commander, and it is one in which they are justified in making if the commander is a man of integrity."⁵ Regardless of the circumstances, the officer will always have a moral responsibility to execute his duties faithfully. This implies a conscious process of evaluating right or wrong.

Integrity, probably the most often violated ethical principle, has traditionally been the "Achilles heel" for weak leaders. Many argue that everyone lies sometimes, and that the military officer corps' ideal of "honor" is too strict a standard. These points notwithstanding, the standard is set and compliance is clearly non-negotiable. However, we continue to have failings most commonly in the areas of exaggerated, intentionally incomplete, misleading, and false reporting.

But what causes an officer, who clearly understands the expectations of the service, to be dishonest? Most often it is pressure, real or perceived, self-imposed or institutionally imposed, to excel. This is felt more often in the overly ambitious. Pressure to excel sets up a quest for perfection, a "zero defects" type mentality, often accompanied by a

management style wherein statistics are the sole judge. Leader and unit assessments are based on these statistics and someone can always get the "stats" up somehow, if enough pressure is applied. "A plethora of opportunities for false reporting accompanies any bureaucratic structure that relies heavily on statistical data as a measure of success."⁶ Once a leader orients on statistics, standards and discipline take a back seat position because the focus is purely on results. The ends far outweigh the ways and means. This will ultimately destroy the character of any military organization by teaching subordinate leaders that operating standards can be separate and distinct from professed standards.

Another point on the use of statistics and their impact on integrity is worthy of mention. There will certainly be occasions when reporting certain statistics may be technically correct; however, they may not tell an accurate story. Reporting those figures to a commander, therefore, would be dishonest unless the commander was informed of the broader picture. Take for example the case of unit status reports. Although the figures may compute to a high level of readiness, if the reporting commander has knowledge of other circumstances which reduce his units' readiness, he has a moral obligation to make that known to his superior.

Pressure is also generated by the superior's leadership style. Overreaction to bad news and routine reports sends a mixed signal to subordinate leaders. They can lose sight of what is really important, and focus a disproportionate amount of energy on whatever piece of minutia seems to be the priority of the moment. This results in confusion regarding organizational priorities, and again, with enough pressure, someone will "fix" the problem. Consider irate reactions to blotter reports, road side spot checks, readiness reports, congressional inquiries, police call, and many other matters which fall in this area. The same is true in the area of inspection results. The more rational the reaction of the commander, the fewer will be the challenges to the integrity of the leaders who undergo future inspections. One closing quote regarding integrity challenges is worthwhile: "If (one) must lie to save his job, then he is working for the wrong person in the wrong place...when a lie starts moving from the top, it creates an avalanche of lying at the bottom."

A fourth common ethical problem is that of selective disobedience. Leaders have a moral obligation to obey the lawful orders of their superiors; however, many selectively disobey (or perhaps more accurately, selectively enforce) the directives of their superiors. If a leader questions the

utility of a directive, it appears that he has only three acceptable alternatives: he can voice his concern and request the policy be changed; he can ask for an exception to the policy; or, he can comply. A few examples of areas commonly not complied with include: weight control; smoking policies; standards of appearance; physical fitness testing; leave and pass policies; and directed training. Noncompliance often leads to other ethical problems. For example, aircraft pre-flight inspections are detailed and time consuming. One could easily forego this laborious task or deviate from the established procedures and take a shortcut. This could lead to a catastrophic failure - causing loss of life and equipment. Given our moral obligation to be competent, it seems that in order to ensure competence, procedures must be followed. Another example may be useful. Assume that a unit fails to complete annual rifle qualification of all assigned soldiers. Directives state that each soldier must do so. Does this create unnecessary pressure on subordinate leaders and staffs to perhaps falsify training records? Compliance would have removed that challenge.

Adherence to the proper directives of your superiors requires personal integrity and professional responsibility. Failing to comply or accepting noncompliance in subordinates

sets a poor example and teaches subordinates that ethics are situationally based. A commander owes his unit consistency in the execution of policies.

The last ethical fault to be discussed is lack of ethical reflection, that is, seeking solutions without considering the ethical aspects involved. "Morality becomes of secondary importance. It becomes "nice-to-have" or optional or dispensable. And as long as this attitude dominates, we will never bring about the kind of character so necessary to our armed forces: a character that refuses to put morality second to anything."⁸ Pragmatic leaders promote this type of behavior, given their demand for facts, practical solutions, and expediency. The "I don't care how you do it, just get it done" style of leadership is an example. Failure to consider the ethical consequences of our actions or decisions violates our oath to execute our duties faithfully, as well as our obligation as leaders to be morally competent.

"It seems to me that the ethical failings in the armed services are not found primarily in people who do what they judge to be wrong. Nor is it found primarily in people who make poor judgments about right or wrong. Rather, it is found in the fact that too many of us often fail to see that the problems we deal with on a daily basis are in fact ethical problems. We don't make bad ethical judgments, but all too often we make no ethical

judgment at all - at least not consciously. And, in practice, this means that we adopt solutions to our ethical problems without the ethical reflection they demand."⁹

ENDNOTES

1. Kermit D. Johnson, Chap, COL, "Ethical Issues of Military Leadership," in Parameters, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1974, p. 39.
2. Clay T. Buckingham, MAJ, "Ethics and the Senior Officer: Institutional Tensions," in Parameters, Vol. 15, No. 3, Autumn 1985, pp. 25-28.
3. Thomas C. Linn, MAJ, "Ethics and How We Fight," in Marine Corps Gazette, Jan 1987, p. 61.
4. Sam C. Sarkesian, "Moral and Ethical Foundations of Military Professionalism," in Military Ethics and Professionalism, ed. by James Brown and Michael J. Collins, p. 2.
5. Michael O. Wheeler, "Loyalty, Honor, and the Modern Military," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, ed. by Malham M. Wakin, p. 178.
6. Peter L. Stromberg, Malham M. Wakin, and Daniel Callahan, The Teaching of Ethics in the Military, p. 32.
7. Ivan Hill, Common Sense & Everyday Ethics, p. 15.
8. Kenneth M. Wenker, "Military Necessity and Morality," in Military Ethics, p. 184.
9. Ibid., p. 181.

CHAPTER IV

LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

I will now focus on the responsibilities that commanders and other leaders have for the ethical health of the Army. The commander is fully responsible for the ethical well-being of his unit. He has a distinct impact on how things are done, how decisions are thought-out, and the philosophies established by subordinate leaders. "The pattern and level of corporate ethical standards are determined predominately by the code of behavior formulated and promulgated by the top management."¹ Ethical failures do not just happen. Certainly there are instances of individual failings; however, most problems can be tied to the personal example of the leader, the ethical climate that the leader establishes in his unit, and the ethically based training that subordinate leaders receive. This point was developed in the discussion of current dilemmas and their causes in chapter III.

The morals of the unit often become the morals of the leader. Regarding the level at which a unit reflects the personality and morals of its commander, in World War II, General Eisenhower noted "...I did not realize, until

opportunity came for comparisons on a rather large scale, how infallibly the commander and unit are almost one and the same thing'."2 What follows is an examination of leader responsibilities for ethics training and climate development, two key ethical imperatives. Discussion of many other ethically related responsibilities will be covered under these two headings.

ETHICS TRAINING

"...the values of individual professionalism, responsibility, integrity, and leadership are learned attributes of character developed through personal experiences, repeated exposure to positive role models, and habitual practice."3

The Army has a responsibility to ensure its leaders are adequately trained in order to execute their duties. In executing this training responsibility, an education process is continuous throughout an officers term of service. This process includes formal education in various service schools and the training conducted in units.

Following pre-commissioning training, company grade officers attend an officer basic course; those remaining in service beyond their initial tour of duty attend an officers advanced course; and most have the opportunity to attend the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3). This is the

point where formal military education ends for most officers. Less than fifty percent of field grade officers attend resident Command and Staff College (CSC) ("During the four years of eligibility, approximately 45 to 50 percent of a given year group will be selected for CSC resident attendance."⁴), and far less are selected to attend a Senior Service College (traditionally, selection rates run 5-6 percent of eligible LTCs and COLs). There is also a wide variety of branch and duty specific schools, most notable are the pre-command courses (PCC) for LTCs and COLs, and modified courses for General Officers.

The Army accepted the fact that serious ethical deficiencies existed in its officer corps in the 1970's and, among many other positive changes, made numerous improvements in the ethical training provided in its schools. The formal courses noted above have an ample amount of ethics related training in their curricula. Ethics related training is particularly substantial at the pre-command courses and the Army War College. The increased attention in these more senior courses is appropriate, as the scope and complexity of the ethical dilemmas faced by leaders grow correspondingly with higher position and increased responsibilities. Additionally, the Army Chief of Staff, General Carl Vuono, has declared

"Our top priority is training."⁵ Leaders must have the best possible ethical education in order to effectively perform their leading and training duties.

Training conducted in units is entirely another matter, because commanders establish ethical training requirements and oversee their execution. Ethics training outside of our formal school system is totally in the hands of leaders and commanders, who accomplish the training through day-to-day personal example, formal and informal instruction, and openly tackling difficult ethical matters as they arise. Ethics training, therefore, varies from unit to unit, dependent solely on the priorities assigned to such by the commander. "...both character and environment influence the commander's search for honesty in his command...it follows that the commander will pursue certain tasks on a continuing basis. He becomes a constant trainer and teacher, especially in reaffirming the importance of character and interpreting moral principles into the concrete conditions of the command."⁶

Ethics training for leaders must be treated as the first order of business for a commander. What must be taught are professional values rather than the individual values which have been developed throughout life. Teaching leaders how to think through decisions and spot the ethical implications is

essential. Training should also "...lay out the major moral questions that we face in the military, show why they make a difference, and show the possible consequences, for good or bad, of different answers" and "explore the question of moral obligation, of our duty toward others and toward our country."⁷ Negative approaches or teaching simply what not to do (as is the case in the mandatory annual review of AR 600-50 (Standards of Conduct)), does not teach moral reflection or awareness and should be kept to a minimum.

Without constant reinforcement, the benefits of a sound ethics training program will diminish. Ethics training is perishable, and therefore requires attention. A proper amount of attention is afforded when the leader's conduct, decisions, and teaching are on firm ethical ground.

CLIMATE DEVELOPMENT

"The task of building an ethical environment where leaders and all personnel are instructed, encouraged, and rewarded for ethical behavior is a matter of first importance. All decisions, practices, goals, and values of the entire institutional structure which make ethical behavior difficult should be examined."⁸

If there is one area in which leaders at all levels could positively influence the ethical health of the Army, it is in developing a command climate in which leaders are permitted to

lead, exercise initiative, and trust in the ethical competencies of their superiors. A healthy environment would be one in which leaders communicate with one another honestly, share good ideas, and orient more on solving problems than on covering them up or placing blame. This is not an easy task for many because it demands a more tolerant and decentralized style of leadership that is oriented on teaching and motivating as opposed to doing. I'm convinced that the relationship between combat readiness and command climate is very close.

The commander has many tasks in developing a positive climate. To start with, his personal conduct must be unquestionable. All commanders are told that they live in "glass houses", and this becomes more evident the higher the position one attains. His personal example is a signal to all that he is personally committed to the same high standards of conduct that he expects in his subordinates. "To be credible, emphasis on ethical conduct in the officer corps must start at the top. Leaders at all levels must set the example. Anything less will only increase...the perception of the 'Do as I say, not as I do' syndrome."⁹

The leader must ensure that organizational policies are coherent and consistent. In other words, priorities must be clear, make sense, and be reinforced consistently in all

directives and other communications. He must personally ensure that subordinate commanders understand organizational goals and objectives and allow them to have a voice in their establishment. Control of the staff in this regard is also important. Staff chiefs must understand the leader's intent as clearly as subordinate leaders do in order to ensure consistency. The leader should also establish a mechanism(s) to identify and attack policies or directives that violate stated priorities. Once all commanders understand their goals, and gain trust in their superior's commitment to follow through on such, then stated values become much closer to operating values. This also contributes to the development of a greater sense of responsibility in subordinate leaders for the overall goals of the organization.

How a leader reacts to various stimulus has a major impact on the ethical climate. "Actions telegraph their true philosophy and must be consistent with what they say... the reactions of senior-level leaders to unforeseen events tell their organization and soldiers how they should act in similar situations."¹⁰ Actions and reactions either reinforce the positive or create pressures that can erode the moral fiber of subordinates. "How a leader says things to his followers is as important as what he says."¹¹ Routine overreaction to bad news may very well temper the way in which similar news is presented

in the future. This is unfortunate because commanders must have totally honest and complete information on which to base decisions and cannot afford having subordinates who feel threatened. Knowing when and how to apply proportionate amounts of pressure is not an easily acquired skill.

Attention to how standards and success are measured is also important. Commanders must consciously decide what management information they require, establish performance standards, and determine how they will use that information for improvement. They then must devote considerable time to ensuring that subordinate leaders understand the standards and why they are important. Again, open communications is essential.

Competition is also an area of measurement that must be scrutinized. Some types of competition may be healthy on the sports field, but in achieving organizational standards the commander must ensure that any hint of competitiveness is clearly stated. Attainment of established standards is a worthy goal as opposed to being best in all areas. Units cannot do great things in all areas, they must focus energy on those areas which are important.

Teaching, mentoring, and nurturing subordinate leaders can do much in building a team spirit in a command. Taking care of

your people has always been a leader imperative; however, to truly make your subordinates successful takes a much more dedicated personal commitment. "As mentor...the commander looks more towards the horizon, to the protege's potential in the years to come."¹² He takes the time to reinforce success, constructively correct mistakes, and develop future competencies. Honest mistakes happen, particularly by those who continually try new approaches to training. The commander must be willing to underwrite such honest errors in the interest of training. I do not advocate a complete "freedom to fail" atmosphere. I do suggest that leaders should not fear making mistakes that are caused by innovation, risk taking, and lack of experience. Routine overreaction to honest errors can stifle initiative, ultimately developing leaders who will wait for orders or withhold action until optimal conditions exist for successful completion of a mission. Battles can be lost by such leaders.

Senior leaders must also continually "take the pulse" of their subordinate units, that is, be sensitive to indicators that point to unhealthy climates. On occasion, despite a leader's best efforts, a subordinate leader may fail to understand and put into practice the commander's intent in establishing an ethical climate. There are always those who do

not listen and choose to operate contrary to the directions of the superior. Such leaders must be identified, given ample opportunity to mend their ways, and if all else fails, they must be removed. The leader must have the courage to act decisively on ethical failures. This message alone reinforces a solid philosophy in terms that all soldiers understand.

Subordinate leaders worthy of their commissions do not expect to be coddled. What they do expect, and deserve, from a leader is: straight talk, the authority to execute their responsibilities, the establishment and enforcement of reasonable standards, and to be held accountable for their actions, in success or failure. Attached as Appendix 2 is a copy of General Bruce C. Clarke's prescription of "What Junior-Level Leaders Have a Right to Expect from Senior-Level Leaders."¹³ His thirteen points are wholly applicable in today's Army. There are numerous other "do's and don'ts" in establishing an ethical climate. What I have attempted to get across is that the leader is the central figure in the process and without his dedicated commitment, our junior leaders will not be getting the best in leadership and ethical development.

The purpose of this chapter has been to outline institutional and leader responsibilities in developing ethical qualities and capabilities in our officer corps. The ethical

challenges that face our Army today can only be met by a corps of leaders well led and well trained for the task. "It is...quite clear that neither competence nor moral sensitivity are acquired by mere contract; military leadership in these areas must proceed by example and by education."¹⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Sam C. Sarkesian, "Moral and Ethical Foundations of Military Professionalism," in Military Ethics and Professionalism, ed. by James Brown and Michael J. Collins, p. 19.

2. Don T. Riley, MAJ, "Serve Your Soldiers to Win," in Military Review, Nov 1986, p. 14.

3. Joseph V. Potter, "War Games," in Military Ethics, p. 190.

4. Field Artillery Magazine, Feb 1990, p. 17.

5. FM 25-100, p. 1-1.

6. Roger H. Nye, COL, The Challenge of Command, p. 107.

7. Peter L. Stromberg, Malham M. Wakin, and Daniel Callahan, The Teaching of Ethics in the Military, pp. 45-46.

8. Kermit D. Johnson, Chap, COL, "Ethical Issues of Military Leadership," in Parameters, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1974, p. 38-39.

9. Thomas E. Kelly III, "Ethics in the Military Profession: The Continuing Tension," in Military Ethics and Professionalism, ed. by James Brown and Michael J. Collins, p. 34.

10. FM 22-103, p. 18.

11. Field Artillery Magazine, p. 19.
12. Nye, p. 152.
13. FM 22-103, inside front cover.
14. Malham M. Wakin, COL, "The Ethics of Leadership II,"
in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p. 212.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

1. Command responsibility and its inherent levels of authority demand moral competence on the part of the leader. Execution of these responsibilities must be accomplished with conscious moral reflection. "...leadership is not a value-free enterprise; approaches which ignore the critical ethical dimensions of leadership must always be viewed as unsatisfactory."¹

2. The ethical guidance contained in existing publications is adequate. The professional Army ethic established in FM 100-1 is clear and is being woven into all subsequent guidance and doctrinal publications.

3. There is no need for a formal Code of Ethics. Moral conduct and decision making cannot be guided by a "checklist". The professional Army ethic as presented in FM 100-1 is as specific a guide as is necessary to outline standards.

4. Given the complex and often ambiguous leadership environment which senior leaders must operate within, the ethical issues they face will be similarly complex. The demand

for formal ethics training therefore increases commensurate with the rank and duty position of the officer.

5. Ethics training presented in the Army's service school system is adequate and oriented at the right levels.

6. Although much progress has been made in improving the ethical well-being of our officer corps, many tensions remain in the form of: careerism, misguided loyalty, integrity failures, selective disobedience, and lack of ethical reflection.

7. The causes for the above tensions are primarily related to the personal example of the leader, lack of ethical training in units, and the command climate established by commanders at all levels. "Where the climate is characterized by threats, lack of ethical clarity, incompetency, and conflicting priorities, subordinates receive the wrong signals of expected behavior."²

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ethics training must focus on the moral implications of actions as opposed to what not to do. The theme of all training must be to teach leaders to think and react ethically.

2. Continue the emphasis currently placed on ethics in the Command and Staff Colleges, Senior Service Colleges, and Pre-Command Courses.

3. At battalion level and above, leader training in ethics must be attacked as hard as we did race relations and drug education in the 1970's. Leader training in units should be taught by commanders rather than Chaplains and Staff Judge Advocate Officers.

4. Commanders must be held accountable for the ethical climate within their commands. Senior leaders must be sensitive to the organizational environments that are created in their subordinate commands.

ENDNOTES

1. Malham M. Wakin, COL, "The Ethics of Leadership II," in War, Morality, and the Military Profession, p. 206.

2. FM 22-103, p. 21.

APPENDIX 1

COMPARISON OF SUBJECTIVE THEMES WHICH IDENTIFY AND EXPLAIN CAUSATION OF VALUE DISSIMILARITY/UNETHICAL CONDUCT

1970 USAWC PROFESSIONALISM STUDY

Selfish and Ambitious Behavior;
Passing the Buck

Mission Accomplishment, Regardless
of Means or Importance

Distortion of Reports, Including
OER

Squelching Initiative - "Don't
Rock the Boat"

Varying Standards - Sustain
Workload

Tolerating Deviance

No Time or Excuse for Failure

Statistical Pressures

1977 PME STUDY

Cover Up to Look Good;
Tell Superiors What They
Want to Hear

"Can Do"/"Zero Defects"
Syndrome

OERs-Career Survival;
Readiness Reports-AWOL;
Lack of integrity in
Senior Officers

Cover Up to Look Good;
Tell Superiors What They
Want to Hear

"Can Do" Syndrome; Cover
Up to Look Good; Lack of
Integrity in Senior
Officers

Leaders Set the Example;
Ethics Start at the
Highest Level; CYA

No Freedom to Fail; Zero
Defects

OER Career Survival;
Readiness Reports;
AWOL; CYA: Cover Up to
Look Good

Improper Goals/Quotas

"Can Do" Syndrome

Pressure to Remain Competitive

OER Career Survival;
Cover Up to Look Good

Legalism

"Cover Your Ass"

Loyalty Up - Not Down

Tell the Boss What He
Wants to Hear; Lack of
Integrity; Cover Up to
Look Good

Lack of Moral Courage/Self
Discipline

CYA; Tell the Boss What He
Wants to Hear; Lack of
Integrity in Sr Officers;
Cover Up to Look Good; Can
Do/Zero Defects Syndromes

APPENDIX 2

What Junior-Level Leaders Have a Right to Expect from Senior-Level Leaders.

General Bruce C. Clarke

1. That their honest errors be pointed out but be underwritten at least once in the interests of developing initiative and leadership.
2. To be responsible for and be allowed to develop their own units with only the essential guidance from above.
3. A helpful attitude toward their problems.
4. Loyalty.
5. That they may be subjected to the needling of unproductive "statistics" competitions between like units.
6. The best in commandership.
7. That the needs of their units be anticipated and provided for.
8. To be kept oriented as to the missions and situation in the unit above.
9. A well-thought-out program of training, work, and recreation.
10. To receive timely, clear-cut, and positive orders and decisions which are not constantly changing.
11. That the integrity of their tactical units be maintained in assigning essential tasks.
12. That their success be measured by the overall ability of a unit to perform its whole mission and not by the performance of one or two factors.
13. That good works by their units be recognized and rewarded in such ways as to motivate the greatest number to do well and to seek further improvement.

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